

REMARKS

Claims 87-100 are now pending in this application, of which claims 87, 88, 94, and 98 are in independent form.

Claims 87-88, 90, 94, and 98 have been amended, no claims have been canceled, and no new claims have been added.

Claim 90 is amended to more eloquently recite the subject matter therein. No substantive change to the claim has been made.

Examiner Interviews

In a telephonic interview held May 15, 2008, Examiner explained to Applicant's representative that Section 5 of the Office Action erroneously indicates a rejection of claim 98-100 under 35 U.S.C. §112, 2nd paragraph. The section should be modified to state "Claims 98-100 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the objections set for this in this Office Action." Similarly, the indication on page 1 of the Office Action that claims 98-100 are allowed is an error. Claims 98-100 are objected to in addition to claims 90-92.

In a telephonic interview on October 6, 2008, Examiner discussed an amendment to the claims proposed by Applicant's remedy to overcome the objection to claims 87-88, 94, and 98. An agreement was not reached. However, in view of the Interview, the relevant claims have been amended to more clearly recite the invention. Applicants respectfully submit that the claim amendments not only overcome the objections, but help to clarify the differences between the claimed invention and the prior art references.

Claim Objections

The Office Action objected to claims 87-100 because of informalities, alleging that the term "near" in independent claims 87-88, 94, and 98 renders the scope of the claims as vague, as "it is not known how near or how close to connect the fluorescent tube and it is not understood at what point the distance to the ends of the fluorescent tube becomes 'near'." Applicants submit that the claims, as amended, clearly recite the proximity of inverter transformers or inverter circuits to ends of corresponding fluorescent tubes. The amended claims simply recite that which was formerly implicit in the claims in view of the specification.

The Office Action objected to claims 90-92 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Moreover, after the Examiner Interview of May 5, 2008 applicants believe independent claim 98 was objected to only as indicated above, and that claims 99-100 were objected to only as being dependent on an objected-to base claim. Applicants thank the examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 90-92 and 99-100. In view of the amendments, independent claims 87, 88, and 98 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, claims 90-92 and 99-100 which depend therefrom are believed to be allowable for the same reasons as their base claims. Withdrawal of the objection and reconsideration of claims 90-92 and 99-100 are respectfully requested.

As the objection to claims 87-100 is believed to be overcome, Applicants respectfully submit that at least claims 87, 90-92, 96-97 are allowable without further discussion.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner rejected claims 88, 89 and 93-95 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,087,757 issued to Honbo et al. (hereinafter "Honbo"). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 88 (94) recites, in part, that

one inverter transformer (circuit) of the pair of inverter transformers (circuits) is positioned in close proximity to one end of the fluorescent tube, and the other inverter transformer (circuit) of the pair of inverter transformers (circuits) is disposed in close proximity to the other end of the fluorescent tube, the length of a connection between the one inverter transformer (circuit) and the one end of the fluorescent tube being substantially shorter than the distance between the one inverter transformer (circuit) and the other end of the fluorescent tube, and the length of a connection between the other inverter transformer (circuit) and the other end of the fluorescent tube being substantially shorter than the distance between the other inverter transformer (circuit) and the one end of the fluorescent tube.

In contrast, Honbo clearly does not disclose a pair of inverter transformers or circuits that are so positioned with respect to fluorescent tubes. Rather, the Figures provided in Honbo disclose only block diagrams, which, although presumably useful to indicate connectivity, cannot

be properly construed as disclosing relative positions of components in a circuit. Moreover, the Honbo specification does not disclose positions of inverter transforms or inverter circuits with respect to fluorescent tubes connected thereto, much less the above-indicated features provided in the present claims.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 88 and 94 are in condition for allowance. Claims 89, 93, and 95, which depend therefrom, are believed to be in condition for allowance for at least the same reasons as their base claims. Withdrawal of the §102 rejection and reconsideration of claims 88, 89 and 93-95 are earnestly solicited.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendment, applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact James C. Larsen, Reg. No. 58,565 at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 

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